

MEMORANDUM

TO: Harry Rowen

FROM: D. Ellsberg

SUBJECT: ACQUISITION OF FILES AND INTERVIEWS ON NATIONAL DECISION-MAKING

COPIES TO: B. Augenstein, C. Wolf, A. Marshall, F. Ikle

DATE: 8/15/68

MEMO NO.: M-5689

1. I believe that RAND should undertake, as a major--conceivably, predominant--part of its national security research, analysis of the decision-making process and the related organization of the US Government with respect to national security. Among the desired outputs would be:
 - a. Greater understanding, foresight and control of the process and organization by high-level decision-makers, civil and military, helping them to frame better decisions, better organization.
 - b. In particular, quicker and more efficient on-the-job training for new highest-level government operators; shortening the costly breaking-in period for a new or turned-over Administration; better transfer of practical insight and experience from past to new Presidents and Presidential Appointees.
 - c. Better understanding, forecasting and influence of foreign national security decision-making by better analogy to, or distinction from, our own; in particular, less tendency to make bad forecasts based on implicit analogies to severely distorted models of our own processes.
 - d. RAND recommendations on alternative organizational forms and modified decision processes.
2. The prospect of a new Administration, with a large turnover in high-level personnel, presents RAND with major opportunities for acquiring unique data on which to base a program of research--if RAND can act rapidly.
 - a. In the short run (now to January 1969):
 - (1). To acquire all, or as many as possible, of McNamara's personal files that he took with him from his period in office, or which he could still acquire.
 - (2). In particular, to acquire all of the "Vietnam: Lessons Learned" studies done at McNamara's initiative; and, if possible, the collected files (perhaps, microfilmed) on which these were based.
 - (3). To acquire the personal files of: Russell Gilpatric; Cy Vance; Paul Warnke; Paul Nitze; Harold Brown (DDR & E, and Secretary of the Air Force); Alain Enthoven; John McNaughton; and Solis Horwitz. (Nitze, Brown, Horwitz, Enthoven and Warnke could be approached on this now with reference to their eventual departure.)
 - (4). To work with Alain Enthoven, in particular, in formulating useful case studies and analytical hypotheses in the Systems Analysis field, examining (and collecting) relevant documents and interviewing staff members in Systems Analysis.

- (5). Make arrangements with high-level officials, who have left or who may expect to leave office over the next year and who are willing to contribute to such research, to "debrief" them on their experiences and observations in Washington with respect to the process of policy formation and decision-making and their views on improving it. Classified interviews, discussions and memo-writing could well be prolonged in some cases, ranging from days to weeks or months, preferably in Santa Monica (though conceivably, when necessary, in Washington or elsewhere).

b. Looking toward the longer run:

- (1). As officials become available, carry out "debriefing" sessions and seminars. This should be a continuing, long-term program, with spurts expected after periods of high turnover in Washington.
 - (2). Build up, by appropriate recruiting, RAND's expertise in acquiring and analyzing such interviews and documenting material, and in carrying out an internal research program on governmental decision-making (including basic research on decision and organization theory to enrich the hypotheses brought to the data and the interviews).
3. Considerations of speed, importance and personal acquaintance suggest that, if approved, Harry Rowen personally should discuss these arrangements with the individuals in Washington concerned. Detailed assurances would probably be required on the control of access and the use of any files and interviews acquired (restrictions applied with the Kennedy Oral History Project would suggest precedence, though we should aim at somewhat freer use of material, at least insofar as RAND classified work is concerned). A minor inducement to the officials concerned could be their own ease of access and storage of materials in our cleared facilities. In many cases they might wish to maintain personal control of sensitive papers in other places; we could offer to copy such files as they were willing to store with us.

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